

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: February 20<sup>th</sup>: Jeremiah 30: Some Notes

**Themes:** The very obvious theme is **HOPE**. The beginning of the section sometimes called The Book of Consolation. Sin deserves punishment, but the purpose of punishment is reform; and a bright future is on offer. It is interesting how often male Bible writers use birth pangs as a symbol of purposeful suffering – but of course there is no more human example of pain with a positive outcome. In terms of the truth of the promise of survival, it is striking that we have to ask where Babylon and Assyria were, but we know where Israel is! One of my Woodmere neighbours flies an Israeli flag with the star of David. In ordinary kingship terms, the promise of the line of David continuing was not fulfilled; but Christians (and the Bible) point to Jesus. Savour “But is the biggest little word in all Scripture.”

**Quotes:** *The time is coming when I'll turn everything around. I'll enter their darkness. I'll come with healing: curing the incurable. Laughter will spill through the doors. Their prince will come from their own ranks. You'll be my very own people; and I'll be your very own God*

**Clarifications:** Think of the New Testament Song of Zacharias. Think of Paul and Silas keeping the other prisoners awake by singing hymns after being beaten up and imprisoned..

**Questions:** How do we tackle the “pie in the sky when you die” criticism of Christianity? The New Jerusalem promise in Jeremiah is very much everything as before only a hundred times better; and we do struggle to picture heaven on earth as anything other than life on earth as we wish it would be – all the familiar enjoyments with none of the familiar problems. (Either that or bobbing up and down perpetually with a harp and a halo, which doesn't sound much fun after the first few days.) You can see why the JWs tend to talk of relationships ironed out and carrying on having kids but without birth pains and without ageing.

Christianity at its best has been about Kingdom building here and now, not just Kingdom waiting for God to do it (whatever it may be) one fine day. How good are we at celebrating the best in what we have and building something better?